



HIGHER LEARNING ADAPTING TO SOCIETY'S CHANGING NEEDS

The academic says because of poor pay, poor working conditions and lack of professional development opportunities fewer people are willing to make the choice to be lecturers.

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Pay for lecturers a serious policy issue



"When we undervalue a profession, we also tell the next generation of bright educators they should not bother teaching—or that if they do, they must take a vow of poverty. Lecturers who spend nights and weekends working other jobs cannot possibly devote the necessary attention to their students or lesson plans. Even worse, talented university students who are passionate about teaching, but seeking a stable future, opt out before they even begin."
MESHAROH KATUSIIMEH RWEBITA

The Daily Monitor of October 2, reported that President Museveni had directed that salaries for scientists and university teachers be moved to "desired levels". He further advised the non-academic and non-technical staff, who for years had a longstanding outcry for salary enhancement to wait until such a time when the country is able to increase their pay.

The President has been very consistent on this issue since 2015 when he struck the deal with university lecturers and must be commended. However, the implementation of the policy by bureaucrats has been sluggish, to say the least.

Policies do not succeed or fail on their own merits; rather their progress is dependent upon the process of implementation. The President seems to be frustrated by the way his directives towards better pay for scientists and academic staff has been "adulterated" culminating into strikes in government universities every now and then.

A university is as good as her quality of academic staff. Academic pay is an important policy issue, because if the relative pay of academics falls, it is likely to lead to lower quality individuals entering and remaining in the profession, as well as a brain-drain to countries that reward academics more highly. These trends are in turn likely to have a knock-on effect on the quality of Uganda's higher education.

Condemnation to poverty

Fewer people are willing to make the choice to be in a profession that puts them at a financial disadvantage. And not only is pay unattractive but also lecturers are not being provided with the working conditions and professional development opportunities that would help them do their jobs and also build their careers.

For too long, universities have relied on the goodwill of their staff as workloads have shot up and pay has declined in relative terms. Academics are overworked as well.

The average number of hours worked, both paid and unpaid is a lot. I have taught at university for more than 15 years but it is rare to get proper leave even when officially you process one.

Somehow you will not tell your supervisor that you did not grade examination papers because you were on leave. You will still have to grade examination papers and prepare teaching materials in preparation for the coming semester even when students are on holiday.

The lecturers also have to write research proposals, collect data and write research reports in line with the public or parish phenomenon.

With declining funding for govern-

ment sponsorship of post graduate education, most academics pay for their own expenses in terms of furthering studies which is a critical requirement for one's promotion to an academic ladder.

And with most universities lacking funding to upgrade their library systems, lecturers find themselves buying text books for teaching out of their own pockets. Many a time you will find lecturers buying their own reams of paper and other stationery for official use.

It is very common to find lecturers using their own personal computers, printers and scanners in a public office. The undervaluing of the teaching profession generally is the reason quality academics are walking away from the profession.

When we undervalue a profession, we also tell the next generation of bright educators they should not bother teaching—or that if they do, they must take a vow of poverty.

And students pay a price: Lecturers who spend nights and weekends working other jobs cannot possibly devote the necessary attention to their students or lesson plans. Even worse, talented university students who are passionate about teaching, but seek-

ing a stable future, opt out before they even begin. No lecturer should have a second job. Lecturers should struggle less financially so they can focus on their critical work in the classroom and other university core functions of research, community service and innovations.

What we can do about it

Tackle the pay and other factors that are prompting lecturers to quit and is dissuading people from joining the profession. The policy interventions and institutional decisions to invest more in academics pay must be supported by all development loving citizens for economic advancement of our country. The President is right to direct the Ministry of Education to better pay for academics and scientists. With this mentality and focus, higher education will be able to play a key role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals which aim to end poverty and ensure prosperity for all among other goals.

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OLD AND PROPOSED MAKERERE SALARIES

Current Salaries

- Professor (science): Shs9.6m
- Professor (arts): Shs9m
- Associate professor: Shs8.5m
- Senior lecturer: Shs7.5m
- Lecturer: Shs6.8m
- Assistant lecturer: Shs5.3m
- Teaching assistant: Shs4.3m

New President Directive

- Professor: Shs9.6m- Shs15m
 - Snr consultant (med): Shs7.3m- Shs17m
 - University lecturer: Shs7.3m- Shs12.2m
 - Director Science: Shs3.6m- Shs16m
 - Doctor: Shs3m- Shs5m
 - Scientist: Shs1.2m- Shs3.5m
- New President Directive
- Professor: Shs9.6m- Shs15m
 - Snr consultant (med): Shs7.3m- Shs17m
 - University lecturer: Shs7.3m- Shs12.2m
 - Director Science: Shs3.6m- Shs16m
 - Doctor: Shs3m- Shs5m
 - Scientist: Shs1.2m- Shs3.5m



Graduates of Makerere Business Institute during their graduation ceremony recently. The argument is that such students miss out on impactful education upon their lecturers are not happy about their pay.